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Contact Info:

Washington Office
187 Dirksen Senate
Office Building
Washington D.C.
20510
(202) 224-2644
(202) 224-8594 fax
(202) 224-8616
TDD
1-800-344-1513

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Contact: Matt Mackowiak, 202-380-8183

BURNS CALLS ATTENTION TO METH PROBLEM THROUGH NATIONAL TOWN HALL

Event shown live in Bozeman, webcast online

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 23, 2006

Washington, DC—Senator Conrad Burns (R – Mont) participated in a bipartisan town hall Monday to highlight the growing problem of methamphetamine use on individuals and local communities. Burns, along with Senators Norm Coleman (R-MN), Craig Thomas (R-WY), Chuck Hagel (R-NE), Mark Pryor (D-AR), and Max Baucus (D-MT), heard testimony from a variety of medical and public service professionals, as well as former meth users, with the youngest being only 16 years old.

In his opening statement, Senator Burns underlined the rapidly growing problem of meth saying, "There is not one community in America that is secluded from this fungus called meth."

Burns and others heard startling statistics about the plague of meth on Montana communities from Montana Meth Project Coordinator, Tom Seibel. In explaining his market research to the committee, Seibel found that "68 percent of young people in Montana found meth easy to get and cheap, 33 percent of young people had been offered meth in the past year by friends, and 24 percent see no risk in trying meth just once." Seibel added that "50 percent of young people saw that the benefits outweighed the risks of meth use." Seibel noted that Montana is the "11th worst out 50 states when it comes to the problem of meth."

Burns, and his colleagues, were moved after watching several intense commercials presented by the Montana Meth Project. Burns praised Tom Seibel saying, "The ads of the Montana Meth Project have changed the attitude of the consumer. These ads, in middle schools especially, have moved the discussion of meth into the halls versus underground where it used to be held." Burns added, "Tom has given a new basis to start with through his ads. We need to have a joint effort at the state and federal level and Tom has given us a great tool to make that case."

There was a brief question and answer session at the end of the town hall with online questions presented to the panelists. A Montana viewer posed a question to the panelists regarding the measures being implemented to restrict the accessibility of substances commonly used in the manufacturing of meth, namely pseudo-ephedrine. Sen. Burns discussed the fact that although ephedrine-containing products sales are controlled by

pharmacists in Montana, such regulations are not nationwide despite recent Congressional attempts.

Burns discussed his belief that the, "answers to the meth epidemic lie with those in attendance and in our counties. We need to appeal to neighborhoods to find out how to combat this out of control problem. We need strong neighborhoods and strong counties on the ground because no county is safe from this."

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